

## Discussion Method

The discussion method is somewhat similar to the socialized recitation method. In the words of Clark and Starr : **“Discussion is not another name for lecture or recitation.”**

Under the socialized recitation method, the environment is socialized with the help of socialized recitation, while in discussion, stress is laid on cultivating students' ability to apply logic and construct suitable environment for it. In the words of Yoakam and Simpson : **“It (discussion) may be defined as a friendly, informed discourse carried on between two or more individuals.”**

This definition seems to be defective, because it does not tell what the form of a discussion should be and why it should be conducted. In the words of Clark and Starr : **“A discussion is more than a full session or argument, it is purposeful, it proceeds towards some goal with a minimum of rambling and bickering.”**

A discussion is not rumour-mongering. It requires some factual knowledge. It is a form of dialogue, in which planned exchange of views is undertaken in a logical form, on a certain topic. It requires cultivation of ability to consult and discuss with other people, and suitable methods of study have to be developed for this purpose. Thus, a discussion is a very meaningful and purposeful dialogue or conversation.

While applying the discussion method, teachers and students have to pass through the following steps :

1. Selection of topic.
2. Preparation for discussion.
3. Organisation of discussion.
4. Evaluation.

Let us study these steps in some detail.

### **Selection of Topic**

Selection of a topic is very important under the discussion method. If a topic is not well selected, then artificial and unnatural circumstances created. If it is undertaken only for recreational purposes, it will fail to achieve its objective. Therefore, while selecting a topic for discussion, a teacher should keep some essential points and facts in view :

1. A topic should be such which can be used for discussion. There are some such topics on which no discussion can take place, such as 'price rises with a rise in demand' etc.
2. A topic should be suitable for student. For it, a topic should be divulged to students beforehand.

### **Preparation for Discussion**

Planning is quite essential for the success of a method. So a well-planned system should be made before the use of the discussion method in the class. The teacher should create such environment in the class that all students are able to exchange their views freely. Proper seating arrangements should be made; it means to say that all students and teacher should be able to see each other. The topic of the discussion should be explained to all students. The students should be asked to prepare in advance.

Before beginning a discussion, a teacher should make environment such that he can exchange his views freely. The more pleasant an environment is, the better will be the results. Special seating arrangements should be made. The most suitable arrangement is such that all students could see one another. So, the crescent shape would be the most suitable. The teacher should sit at a place from where he can keep an eye on all students.

Before discussion is started, it should be ensured that students have a clear knowledge of the topic. Therefore, while presenting a problem, the teacher should give an introductory lecture.

A problem should be related with some activity. It would make them take interest.

It is necessary for a teacher to make preparation before the discussion, so it is also necessary for students to make preparation. They should study a problem beforehand, so that they can take part in the discussion well. Therefore, students should be assigned a topic in advance. **Wesley and Wronski** have suggested the following points in order to suggest how students should prepare for a discussion :

1. Always keep in view the topic and problem.
2. Gather information from the best sources.
3. Read monthly magazines and booklets.
4. Study newspapers.
5. Study important parts of the lesson.
6. Read purposefully and leave out the purposeless points.
7. Read critically.
8. Read objectively.
9. Distinguish between facts and concepts.
10. Read patiently in order to understand the writer's views.
11. Infer after reading, and then generalize.
12. Summarise at the end of the lesson.
13. Understand the main points in a logical way.
14. Prepare carefully.

### **Organization of Discussion**

A discussion can be started by a student or teacher. It can be begun by telling a story, presenting a problem, displaying an object, showing a picture or describing an incident. How a discussion has to be started, depends upon the aims of the discussion. After a discussion is started, it is required to arrive at its aims. It requires efficient organization. The organization should be so conducted as to help all participating students express their views easily, freely, voluntarily and successfully. The organizer should keep the predetermined aims in view. Questions can be used to direct the discussion to the desired direction. Some specific facts can be explained too, some points can be

analyzed, and at last, organization of a discussion can include the following four points or steps :

1. Beginning,
2. Analysis,
3. Explanation,
4. Summary.

As far as the running of a discussion is concerned, the class can be divided into smaller groups or the whole class can participate in it. If the class is divided into groups, then each group should comprise of not more than 4-5 students. Each group would arrive at a conclusion after discussion and present their final conclusion to the problem. In the end, all groups would submit their reports and the whole class would discuss on these reports.

### **Evaluation**

The chief objective of a discussion is to bring about desirable change in students. If a discussion does not bring such change, then it would be considered meaningless. If it brings about a change, then it becomes necessary to measure the amount of change. Evaluation can be undertaken by student or teacher. Different types of questionnaires or interviews can be used for evaluation to find out what changes have occurred and in what fields; for example, how much knowledge has been enhanced, how much intellectual development has occurred, how much intellectual ability has been raised, what changes have occurred in interests, what changes have occurred in aptitude and values, etc.

Besides, a discussion allows us to evaluate ourselves. It is good to know how successful a discussion has been. We can criticize a discussion on the following bases :

1. How successful was it so far as objectives are concerned?
2. What difficulties and shortcomings were faced in a discussion, and what were its causes?
3. Did each student take part in it?
4. Did some students remain more vocal?

### **Merits of Discussion Method**

1. Today's children will grow into adult citizens, who would elect the government by their power of vote and elect representatives in the Lok Sabha and the Vidhan Sabhas,

where they will find solutions to problems. The discussion method in the class will guide them in this direction.

2. The discussion method is psychological because the students become active in it and they contribute in the development of the lesson.
3. It has been often seen that students learn the textbook or teacher's lecture by rote, but there is no place for learning by rote in the discussion method. Whatever knowledge is acquired by students, is due to their understanding and mental activities. It is impossible to take part in a discussion without proper thinking, because there can be several views on both sides of the topic, which have to be heard and their responses have to be thought out.
4. The discussion method trains students in selecting and organizing the content.
5. When a teacher conducts a discussion in the classroom, he attempts to find out a collective decision to the problem. It makes consent of all participants possible.
6. There is no place for the material learnt by rote in the discussion method.
7. This method develops cooperative contest in students and inculcates the spirit of tolerance, because it is necessary to have difference in views in the presentation of views, but it never means that they become enemies and cultivate hatred in them. The participants have to patiently hear the views of the opposing participants. They have to hear them whether they desire or not.
8. This method develops the power of logic in students.

### **Demerits of Discussion Method**

1. A meaningful discussion can be an asset, but it has been often seen that a discussion turns meaningless which is a waste of time. At times, some students start to present meaningless views in order to show their superiority.
2. It is the thinking of certain people that the discussion method cannot be used to teach the whole syllabus. Some contents are such which have no opportunity for discussion. Besides, this method consumes more time in completing a lesson as

compared to the lecture method or textbook method.

3. It has been seen that all students do not take part in the discussion. Some students take part prominently and do not allow other students to speak. Some students are shy and they do not benefit from this method.
4. Proper organization of a discussion requires skilled teachers who are quite less in number.

### **Suggestions for Making Discussion Method Effective**

1. All necessary preparations should be made before commencement of the discussion. A teacher should see to it that the students have studied magazines or literature related to the topic.
2. Suitable limitations to the problem should be specified so that the students do not deviate from it. The teacher should not allow any meaningless or unrelated discussion to take place in the class.
3. The problem or topic for the discussion should be selected according to the age and stage of students and their ability to understand its significance.
4. The discussion method can be successful only when all students take part in it. So a teacher should motivate shy students in it.
5. The evaluation of the discussion should be done without any prejudice.